

10 July 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
(Draft for Board Consideration)

SUBJECT: Significance of the Yalu Bombings

ATTACHMENT: The Effectiveness of the Yalu Bombings

A. The Failure of the Communist Air Forces to Intercept UN Aircraft

1. US intelligence agencies entertain four possible explanations of the failure of the Communists to offer air opposition to the Yalu bombings of 23 June:

a. The raids completely surprised the enemy, because of the fact that the UN fighter-bombers came in at low altitude and struck fifteen targets simultaneously.

b. The enemy may be conserving his aircraft and maintaining them in a high state of preparedness for a future offensive.

c. The raids caught the Communists in the midst of staging operations in which the Chinese and/or Soviet pilots newly moved into the area were fledglings.

d. The Communist Air Forces were uninstructed for such an emergency and could not take the initiative without the approval of higher authorities.

2. There is insufficient evidence to determine which of these theories, if any, is correct.

B. Communist Reactions since the Bombings

3. Peiping's reaction to the bombings has been angry and intense, suggesting that Communist China was hard hit by this sudden

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loss of power. After a four-day period of ignoring the raids, Chinese Communist broadcasts have since discussed them at great length, pointing out that they are the latest in a series of acts (including germ warfare, POW atrocities, etc.) by which the Americans, defeated in Korea, are attempting to wreck the truce negotiations and undermine peace in Asia. Peiping evidently intends to make the Yalu bombings another cause celebre, since it is already organizing "mass protests." Peiping broadcasts have thus far stated that the Communists cannot be coerced and that "US crimes will not go unpunished;" these broadcasts, however, do not reveal a Communist intent to retaliate.

4. Moscow first mentioned the attacks three days after they occurred, in a Home Service radio broadcast which stated that "a power station" on the Yalu had been bombed, and that a hospital nearby had also been hit. Subsequent Moscow broadcasts have been merely news reports and have all played down the significance both of the plants and of the bombings. The Soviet press has largely confined itself to reprinting non-Communist reactions throughout the world which were critical of the bombings.

C. Probable Consequences of the Yalu Bombings

5. These raids will seriously curtail industry in North Korea, will deprive Manchuria (an area of existing power shortage) of an estimated 20 percent of its former power supply, and will, at least temporarily, directly affect Communist military capabilities in Korea.

6. The bombings will probably not, in themselves, lead to a CCAF retaliatory offensive, or seriously alter existing Communist military plans for Korea.

7. Communist propaganda will continue its program of linking the Yalu raids to germ warfare and other US "atrocities," and will attempt to exploit widespread non-Communist criticism of the US for acting unilaterally in the Yalu bombings.

8. The effect of the Yalu bombings upon the armistice talks is difficult to assess. The success of the raids may have increased US bargaining pressure, but this may have been somewhat offset by the added rift the Yalu incident has brought in US relations with the non-Communist world. The net effect, therefore, may be small, and existing Communist policies with respect to an armistice may not be radically changed as a result alone of the Yalu raids.

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ANNEX: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE YALU BOMBINGS

1. On 23 June the four principal hydroelectric systems of North Korea (Suiho, Kyosen, Chosen, and Fusen) were attacked by 342 UN fighter-bombers. These raids, together with follow-up attacks, knocked out an estimated 90 percent of North Korea's former power capacity.

2. Power for North Korea must now be supplied by one insignificant hydroelectric plant and several small independent thermal plants. Pyongyang radio broadcasts have been sporadic since the bombings, and it is probable that communication facilities as well as most mining and industrial activities in North Korea have been seriously affected by the almost complete power blackout.

3. The effect of the bombings upon Manchurian industry is even more serious, since there was already a power shortage in Manchuria. Dairen and Port Arthur, with some of the largest industrial plants in China, were obtaining power from the Suiho plant. Mukden, Antung, and Anshan are believed to have been receiving some power from Suiho. The bombing of Suiho has probably reduced Manchuria's power supply by 20 percent, and will unquestionably prevent the Communists from achieving their present goal of restoring 1943 levels of industrial production in Manchuria by the end of this year.

4. The damage probably does not directly affect the USSR's power supply in the Far East, since there are believed to be no major power lines in existence between North Korea and Vladivostok. Communist operation of the airfield at Antung will probably not be materially affected, for the field has two or three stand-by power plants available. Dairen and Port Arthur are probably now receiving some power from nearby thermal plants, and possibly from the hydroelectric plant at Kirin.

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